

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Wanted! Robin Hood

By
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Wanted! Robin Hood was originally produced by the Library Theatre, UK, in 2013

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Characters.

Marian of York

Robin Hood

Will Scarlett

Friar Tuck

Little John

Much the miller's son

Guy of Gisborne

Walter Fitzwarren.

Sir Eustace

Bishop of Lincoln.

Wilfred of Edwinstowe

Soldier loyal to Lady Marian [Geoffery]

3 Soldiers loyal to Walter Fitzwarren

The play was written for a minimum cast of eight.

ACT ONE.

WINTER-1189 NOTTINGHAM CASTLE.

[The last year of the reign of Henry 11. Drums-Enter three Soldiers-who roughly command the crowd. Drum roll -enter Walter Fitzwarren-Sheriff of Nottingham.]

Walter Ten years-ten long dry years fighting in the Holy land. Good people of Nottingham, I'm glad to be home. I cannot tell you the joy I feel to see once more the fertile beauty of the great forest that surrounds us. I return in the King's command and let it be known to all, especially to those who appear ignorant of the fact that Sherwood Forest belongs to the King and I am duty bound to uphold the laws of the Forest in his name. Whoever wishes to clear and cultivate land in Sherwood Forest must seek permission from this office. Whoever wishes to cut wood be it for fire or for building must seek permission. Such permissions will be granted on payment of a fee. Those who do not pay will be brought before the Forest Court, fined or imprisoned. No man shall keep dogs for hunting. No man may carry a bow or arrows in Sherwood Forest for the King loves the beasts of the wood as if he were their own Father. Any man who kills wild boar or deer shall be named an outlaw-his land and all his worldly goods shall be forfeit and he will cast himself beyond the mercy of the crown. He shall be hunted, even as he has hunted-and he shall hang for his crimes.

[A hunting horn sounds. Exit Walter.]

THE FOREST OF SHERWOOD.

[Night. The sound of Horses hooves. The sound of arrows whistling through the air. The cries of men—fading. Enter Marian, hands tied, gagged blindfolded and hooded with Much and Will Scarlet.]

Much Stop, stop, stop. Ah she kicked. She kicked me again. I can't hold her Will.

Will No names, no names.

Much I know, I know. Where's John?

Will For pities sake shut yer mouth man.

[Enter John]

Will Have they fled?

John I reckon-an two with arrows in them.

Much Hah. Thought we three were thirty.

John What does she have?

Will Haven't searched her yet.

Much Can't get close enough.

John My lady-

Much Careful-she got a kick on her like-

John Ah!

Much Told you.

John Listen up-Lady-the soldiers you were with have upped and ran away and left you alone with us. You have no choice but to have faith in our good natures. We are thieves is all- and no harm shall come to you. I promise.

Much ---She is gagged you know – beneath hood.

Will And blindfold.

John Blindfolded, gagged, hooded?

Much She has given us much trouble.

John Tis a wonder she can breathe-or have you put a clothes peg on her nose. Take off the hood. Go on. Lady, forgive these injustices. A simple nod will be your promise to cause no further trouble. In return I will cut you free so you may with dignity 'search yourself' and hand to us everything—

Will Everything!

John Of value you have about your person.

[Marian nods. He cuts her hands free. She takes off the mouth gag and spits.]

Will You can leave the blindfold.

Much Yeah-not stupid.

[Marian takes off a broach, a hair pin, buttons, a purse etc. The thieves gather round their horde]

Much We have struck lucky lads.

John Twenty gold marks.

Will Twenty five-

Much And counting.

Will What about that ring?

Marian You cannot have the ring.

Will You don't tell us lady what we can have or not. We shall have what we please.

John Give him the ring.

Marian No.

[Will tries to take it by force-she bites him. He draws his knife.]

John Please my lady-give him the ring.

Much Or he'll cut yer finger off. He will.
[She allows him Will to take the ring.]

Marian You, John- are you the leader of these men?

Will No-he is not.

Marian Who is in command? [They laugh] I would speak to the man in charge.

Will In charge hey?

Much In command.

John I would like to hear that conversation if you could speak to a --

Will Breath of wind- or a?

John Rustle of leaves-or a?

Will A pair of antlers.

Marian Why are you laughing?

[They laugh even louder-]

Much No idea meself.

Marian Who is in charge?

Will And what would you say to 'our leader'-if he was here?

Marian I would say, take the money, hairpin, necklace, broach, bracelet and buttons-but give me back the ring.

Will Why? What's the ring worth?

Marian Your lives.

John You have some pluck lady-to threaten us here-in our own country.

Marian Give it back and I will forget I ever heard the names John -Will and-

Much Much.

[Will hits him]

John You have our names so what be yours?

Will Best be telling him.

Marian Marian-soon to be Marian Fitzwarren. [Will and John exchange a glance]
Therefore I urge you-give back the ring and I will say nothing of you when I am questioned- and I will be questioned.

Much Who is the lady then? What's the matter?

John The lady it seems- is getting married.

Much Congratulations.

John To Walter Fitzwarren-High Sheriff of Nottingham.

[Will and John stand aside]

Much No, no no-you don't want to be doing that- a colder crueller man you won't find in all of England. People say-he once killed a soldier of Saladin-and to gain that soldiers' strength he drank his blood. Besides-isn't he a bit old for you.

Will You know what this means?

John Don't even think it.

Will Think it we must-or think of his revenge –women and children murdered.

Much Speak up lads-think of what?

Will We'd best be digging a hole for the lady.

Much What she want a hole for?

[They look at him]

Much Oh-she needs a—

Will No you ruddy fool. A grave- a grave is what she needs.

Marian Thieves- that's all you are. You promised me.

[Will draws his knife again. Enter Friar Tuck armed with a wooden stave.]

Tuck Take one more step and you'll be digging your own grave. Put down the knife.

John Put it down.

Will Who are you Tuck- to command me ? I will not be commanded-not no more-

[He steps toward Marian- and Tuck fells him with a single blow. Will slowly gets up and then exits- he takes the ring.]

Tuck Run you villain-run and hide in shame! Why stand you still?

John I never would have—I did not-

Tuck You did too. I saw it in your eyes.

[Exit John]

Tuck Remove the blindfold.

Much She will see my face.

Tuck Don't worry-tis easily forgot.

[He takes it off-then exits before she can turn.]

Marian Praise God.

Tuck Are you hurt?

Marian My ankle-twisted-swollen.

Tuck There's five mile of brook and bramble between here and Nottingham-there's nowt for it but walking.

Marian No horse?

Tuck We had a horse-but-uh {He pats his stomach}.

Marian We? You are one of these-thieves?

Tuck Sometimes the shepherd must follow the flock. Now you must walk or sit there and catch a death of cold.

Marian It's no good. There's only one thing to be done-good, strong Friar

Tuck Hey? No!

Marian Carry me.

Tuck Over ten mile of brook and bramble?

Marian If you wish 'Friar Tuck' to have your name forgotten- as I pledge to forget the others-for the price of a lift.

[Tuck shakes his fist at heaven. She climbs on his back. They walk. Dawn breaks]

Marian Thank you Friar. You've saved me.

Tuck Have I? Forgive my forthright nature, but have you ever met your future husband?

Marian Once-when I was twelve- before he left for the crusade. How come you- a Friar with thieves?

FT They weren't born thieves my lady-just lads-orphans most of em who had no other choice but to live wild in the woods. I have done my best to restrain them-teach them-father them-though sometimes I despair of them.

Marian Under what circumstance-orphans?

FT There we go lass-Nottingham. You can limp the last lap.

Marian I'm in your debt.

FT I beg to differ. I fear I've carried you from frying pan to fire.

Marian I have no choice. But I will not despair Friar-if you will not.

FT I will pray Lady Marian-as I do each year-for spring.

[He turns to leave and he sees her walking without a limp. She smiles at him. Tuck shakes his fist at heaven]

THE CASTLE AT NOTTINGHAM

[Marian's room. Sir Eustace supervises the arrival of some clothes on a rail and some books.]

Eustace Is everything as you wish my lady? What kind of house was your Father's house in Edwinstowe?

Marian Thatched.

Eustace And look at you now-in a castle. The wheel of fortune has turned in your favour.

Marian Sir Eustace is there anything I can do for you?

Eustace No, no, no. The shoe is on the other foot. I am at your service- and the service of my Master. I am you see his Steward.

Marian I realise.

Eustace Oh-[He sees her book] Do you read my lady?

Marian Which is why I have books.

Eustace Very good-but-uh- do not emphasise this or other such accomplishments in the Sheriff's company. He is not one for books-or the emotions in them. His own accomplishments such as swordplay and archery-he is the finest archer I ever saw-are indeed worth emphasis and he is not immune to praise regarding them. Praise him my lady—but- a word to the wise- never ever laugh at him. You see my lady-we must work together-the wife and the Steward. It was ever thus-- Oh—[Looks from window] quite a drop-quite a drop.

Marian Are you thinking of jumping Sir Eustace?

Eustace Ha, Ha Ha. No. Alas I have no head for heights- and cannot swim. No no no- my talents lie elsewhere.

[Enter Walter Fitzwarren. Eustace exits backwards. Walter stares at Marian]

Walter I did not think I would survive to see this day-to see you a grown woman. Are you recovered?

Marian Yes my Lord-thank you.

Walter The manner of your arrival has caused quite a stir. The whole town talks about you- and are looking forward to our wedding----- as I do.

[Marian curtsies]

The guards you were with say they saw nothing- heard nothing- but the flight of arrows.

Marian It was dark.

Walter Darker still in the dungeons-but I can't get them to remember anything.

Marian They are imprisoned?

Walter A night in the cells will do them no harm-for failing to protect you.

Marian They are my Fathers' men- were-and now are mine. Please release them.

Walter -----As you wish. It means however that you- are my only witness.

Marian We were delayed by rain- suddenly our way was barred by a fallen tree and then- there was the sound of a horn- a hunting horn- much shouting and all was chaos and confusion- and I was taken.

Walter By how many?

Marian Hard to say- three—or thirty.

Walter Did you see the faces of these men?

Marian I was blindfolded.

Walter Did you hear them call each other by name?

Marian If I did I can't recall them—I was frightened-the wind was high and it was so dark-the moon could not pierce the trees and all I could hear were arrows slicing through the air- and then- rough hands-rough hands. {She puts the back of her hand to her forehead}

Walter Where is the ring I sent you?

Marian Stolen. But at least I'm safe. That is what matters.

Walter Who took the ring?

Marian My Lord-I would like to forget this unhappy incident-and we have more important things to think about--- a wedding to- to discuss. Sir-It is ten years- since you left for the Holy land- and I was wondering if in that time- you have had cause to----- change your mind-regarding me?

Walter Change my mind?

Marian I cannot believe that in ten years-you a soldier- do not have a lady somewhere who waits for you. I could not in conscience hold you to my Father's promise-if that were the case?

Walter [He moves closer to her kisses her roughly. When it's over she turns away-shaken.] Be reassured-I never change my mind. I will catch the man who stole the ring- and watch him hang.

Marian I don't think you'll find him.

Walter Why should I not find him?

Marian He is somewhat elusive—I believe.

Walter Naturally- he's a thief.

Marian And yet-

Walter What?

Marian A man of some quality.

Walter You spoke to this man?

Marian ---Yes-I

Walter You did not say so before.

Marian I was in shock- but now I come to think of him-

[A light rises on Robin Hood-sitting in the branches of The Great Oak.]

Walter But now? [He takes her by the shoulders]

Marian I think of him-he comes to mind-quite clearly-

Walter The leader of these men?

Marian I- yes-

Walter You said you were blindfolded.

Marian He removed it.

Walter What for?

Marian To look at me.

Walter 'Look' at you?

Marian And I at him.

Walter Why?

Marian He wanted me to remember his face.

Walter --What did he look like?

Marian Oh-a strong face. Strong but gentle. Refined almost.

Walter A nobleman?

Marian A yeoman, with a noble countenance. A natural leader of men I would say. They obeyed his commands without question.

Walter Short? Tall?

Marian Tall. Taller than you.

Walter Age?

Marian Young---younger than you. In fact-my age- no more than- twenty two.

Walter What was he wearing?

Marian Strange clothes, as if the spirits of the wood had dressed him.

Walter His name?

Marian If he told me -

Walter A trade name perhaps-Tanner-Bowman-Reeve-

Marian -I can't remember.

Walter If he wanted you to know his face there's no reason he wouldn't have told you his name- you just need to think woman- think.

Marian H--Hood.

Walter Hood? Nothing more?

Marian Rob-Robin----

Robin+ Marian Robin Hood.

[He lets her go. He has gripped her hard but does not realise it.]

Marian What will you do?

Walter I will catch this Robin Hood-and hang him. You have my word on it.

[She bows her head and curtsies. Exit Walter Fitzwarren]

Marian Robin Hood. Younger, taller, a fine archer-

Robin The best in England.

Marian Better than you Sir Walter. Literate-

Robin Nearly.

Marian Foolish-

Robin Rarely.

Marian Elusive-

Robin Certainly-

Marian As a breath of wind-

Robin A fall of leaves-

Marian Antlers fleeing-through forest trees----
Robin Hood -bold Robin Hood. Rebellious-

Robin Proud-

Marian And free-

R+M Free----

Marian *Robin Hood, bold Robin Hood
Rebellious proud and free
With four and twenty arrows stood
Under a Greenwood tree.*

SHERWOOD

R+M+J *Under a Greenwood tree.*

All *In summer when the woods are bright
And leaves be large and long-
It is full merry in fair forest
To hear the small birds song.
To see the deer draw to the dale
And leave the hill's high lea
And shadow them in leaves so green
Under the greenwood tree.*

Will PAH! I hate this ruddy wood- I am froze-froze. I want a proper house and- and a fire which actually warms you up and a proper bed-and much else besides.

Much It's just a song.
Will Well stop singing it-cos it's not summer is it?

John +Much [Loudly and in Will's face]
*In summer when the woods are bright
And leaves be large and long
It is full merry in fair forest
To hear the small birds song.*

[Robin drops down and Marian exits.]

Will AHHH!
Much Robin!
Will I wish you'd stop doing that. Where have you been?
Much You missed the job.
Will Aye -missed your share of the takings too.
Much It was more than we could have hoped for Robin. Look.
Robin I have no need to look-Tuck has told me all about it.

[Robin Looks at John who stares at the ground.]

Will Where were you?
Tuck Tell them. Go on there's no shame in it.
Robin The Abbey-at Kirklees.
Much What for?
Tuck Learning to read Much-learning to read.
Much What for?
Tuck What for? I'll give you what for.
Will We risked our lives for these buttons- and you not being there made our risk the greater.
Robin And the sum of this thinking?
Will You are not fit to lead us. Not fit I say.
Robin What do you think Much?
Much I wish you had been there Robin-that's as I think.

Robin John?

John I don't care no more. Last night I contemplated killing the lady we had kidnapped just to save my own skin.

Robin You would not have it done it.

John But I thought it- and that's half the journey. This life is no good for me Robin- there's no purpose here.

Will Here is the purpose [he holds the money] As for killing-I could have done it-and that's why none are fit to lead –except me-Will Scarlet.

[Silence]

Tuck You'll have to fight for it- I knows that much.

Will Aye, I'll fight, knife, sword, stave tis yours to choose since you been challenged.

Robin Tuck?

[Tuck brings forward two Staves –one long- one no more than three feet]

Robin Now tis your turn to choose Will.

 [Will grins and picks the largest Stave]

Robin When you're ready John.

[John blows the hunting horn and the fight begins. Robin avoids with grace the blows from the larger stick and finds his way in close from where he can rain blows down on Will without return. Will falls.]

Will Go on then Robin- kill me- for I too am lost and see no purpose to this life.

Robin Kill you? We have run these woods since we were lads. I cannot kill you any more than I can cut off my own leg. Will Scarlet.

[Robin Hugs Will to him and after a moment. Will returns the embrace with much emotion. Tuck smiles- as do the others]

Robin What we have is each other. What else we may find in this life I cannot say. Now give me the ring.

Will What ring? Oh that ring.

Robin [Examines the ring.] Was she pretty?

Much Who?

Robin The lady- 'Marian'?

John What are you thinking?

Will What do you think he's thinking?

Robin I am thinking 'good' Little John- of returning this ring. [They all look at him.] So that the Sheriff will have one less grievance against us.

Tuck You cannot show your face in Nottingham- not now.
[He gives Robin a 'WANTED' poster.]

Much What does it say?

Tuck Oh can't you read- any of you?

John Just tell us what it says.

Robin 'Wanted-Robin Hood- Dead or-----Dead'. [Silence] Well--it's nice to be wanted.

Much Wanted's one thing-dead's another.

Robin Which is why I must not get caught. Tuck- I need your curtail robe.

Tuck I'm not giving you my—

Robin Your robe- and a straw pillow.

Tuck I said no. No as in no means no. No.

Robin Well lads-don't just stand there.
[They leap with glee upon Tuck, and in a moment he is disrobed]

Tuck You villains-if I had no mead in me you'd all be leaf mulch!
[He roars and tries to attack them.]

Tuck Think life is a game don't you? Well life will teach you a lesson yet-all of ya! [To Robin] You especially.

[Robin puts on the robe and the cushion under-they laugh at him and Tuck gives up- and shakes his fist at heaven.]

Will But Robin-it is an emerald ring—Emerald.

Robin Will-of that shade-we have more than our fair share- don't you think?

THE CASTLE

[A single shaft of light reaches into Marian's room-she kneels in its warmth.]

Marian Dear Father. I know in my heart-you thought to do me a great service by giving me in marriage to Walter Fitzwarren and I know also- that I am duty bound to fulfil your pledge- or bring dishonour to your name. But-if from heaven you can

see me now-in this stone chamber-then take pity on me-take pity on your daughter-- [Eustace 'appears'] Sir Eustace?

Eustace I have brought you-'The order of service' my lady. For the wedding. [He looks around again] We will have a rehearsal of course-with the Bishop- at his convenience.

Marian Thank you.

[Eustace stands still]

Marian You may go.

Eustace May I. [He looks around-then leaves.]

[Marian shudders. She puts the papers down and is about to cry- but forces herself not to. She sings to herself 'In summer when the woods are bright-And leaves be large and long' and goes to her clothes rail-pulls back the clothes and sees a Friar standing stock still]

Robin Please do not cry out.

Marian Who are you? What are you doing-in my wardrobe?

Robin Shh lady. Don't you know me?

Marian No, I do not--Get out out-out-before I call for---

[Robin holds out the Emerald ring]

Robin Yours I believe.

[She takes the Ring.]

Marian You're not the Friar who carried me from Sherwood.

Robin No-I am another-Brother. He asked me to return this ring in the hope that it would make the Sheriff less displeased with the poor men who took it from you.

Marian Give the friar my thanks for helping me- and the return of the ring-though I fear it's too late.

[She puts it back on her finger]

Robin You don't look happy to see it.

Marian No? [Holding back her tears] Then I must learn to hide my feelings. Here- I will have to hide them all—I will become as stone- I will become wall.

Robin My lady?

Marian Friar-I am so confused and frightened. Will you hear my confession?

Robin Well I-now?

Marian Please. [She falls to her knees]

Robin Right. Rest your knees upon—this straw cushion. What troubles you-my child?

Marian I'm going to get married.

Robin Be happy then.

Marian Happy? I must swear before God that I will love cherish and obey a man who I fear to obey, do not cherish and will never love.

Robin How did this unhappy situation come to pass?

Marian Is your life so cloistered that you don't know a woman can be bought and sold in marriage-as I was sold to Walter Fitzwarren. I do not know what to do.

Robin There is only one thing you can do.

Marian Name it good Friar-name it.

Robin Jump out of the window-----swim the moat-steal a horse and ride to freedom.

[Knocking at the door]

Robin I am not here. I am a shadow.

[He hides behind the clothes. She stares at the empty space. Another more impatient knock.]

Marian Enter.

[Enter Walter Fitzwarren]

Forgive me-I was- lost in my own thoughts.

Walter Marian, I wanted to—you've been crying.

Marian Yes-yes —I was reading.

Walter --Reading?

Marian It quite upset me. Tristan and Isolde.

Walter Who are?

Marian Were-lovers. Tragic lovers.

Walter In history or in legend?

Marian Both I believe.

Walter -- Marian-I've not been able to give you the attention you deserve. This Robin Hood has diverted me. I've had no time to talk to you more personally-more intimately- and I would like to do so.

Marian Now?

[He locks the door]

Walter I've been a soldier a long time. I am not used to----- I fear that my behaviour before was of a rough nature. In short-I am not used to—relations--

Marian I understand.

Walter I wish to be honest with you-so that I may-as it were begin again. I know you will have heard stories about me, some ridiculous-some true-that I'm unfeeling, cold-cruel even. Sometimes-that is how one must be- when faced with a childish- and rebellious population-but I- I will not be that man with you. I--

[He sees the straw pillow and kneels]

Marian of York, I have seen great victories in battle- and great defeats. In my darkest hours, it was one face that gave me hope-the face of an innocent child- now a beautiful woman-untainted by the evil of--experience. Give me your heart Marian and I will--- provide you with every comfort and defend your life and body as if it were Jerusalem itself.

[He kisses her hand]

The ring?

Marian Yes-it came back.

Walter You said it was stolen.

Marian It was-but it's been returned. I don't know how-I-I fell asleep and when I woke – it was there –on my finger-as if-by----

Walter Magic? You think I believe in magic?

[He draws his sword and searches the room- pulls back the clothes and sees a Friar's robe upon the floor. Robin appears behind him holding the long waist rope of the Curtail robe.]

Robin Looking for me?

[The Sheriff attacks Robin with his sword- but using the rope Robin disarms him and then ties the Sheriff to a chair. He ties one end of it around the Sheriff's neck.]

Robin Don't struggle-the more you struggle the tighter it gets.

Walter Who are you?

Robin I think you know.

Walter --Robin Hood?

Robin A most intimate speech Sir Walter-

Walter What do you want?

Robin Everything.

Walter No man can have everything.

Robin Then I must satisfy myself with revenge.

Walter Revenge-for what?

[Robin pulls the rope tighter and the Sheriff cries out in agony]

Marian Stop-stop!

Robin It appears, this is not the time or place. The time will make itself known-the place will be beneath the great Oak in Sherwood Forest. There you and I will have our reckoning.

[Soldiers are now at the door-knocking on it furiously. He falls to his knees in pain.]

Marian You're wounded.

Robin Marian-come with me now- and live the life you want to live –free in Sherwood forest.

Marian No. No-I can't-I can't.

[More thudding on the door]

Robin Hold tight Sir Walter.

[Robin leaps from the window-vanishing-the High Sheriff of Nottingham is pulled across the room –chair and all. A distant splash.]

Marian Robin?

[There are more thuds on the door and Marian goes to let them in.]

Walter No- No-

Marian What?

Walter I will not be seen-like this. Untie me-untie me.

[She stares at him then unlocks the door. Soldiers and Eustace enter. They stop and see The Sheriff- and the soldiers smile.]

Walter UNTIE ME!

[They do so.]

Walter Get out. Out!

[Exit soldiers- Eustace retreats but does not exit. Walter hits Marian once-she falls.]

Walter What did he mean-live the life you want? Why was he here?

Marian He came to return the ring-that is all.

Walter You take me for a fool?

Marian I take you for a soldier-who likes to be spoken to directly-truthfully-without fuss.

Walter Say what you want to say.

Marian There are times when a marriage arranged as ours can be a happy one. I do not believe this will be true-for us. I know it. I feel it on my burning face. Therefore I humbly ask you- beg you to search your better nature and release me from my father's pledge. Do not strike me!

Walter I offered you the better part of my nature-on my knees I offered it. It will not happen again. As for your Father-he made a lawful and binding contract which he understood. It was I who put a roof over your head in York. It was I who paid for your 'education' at the abbey. I who paid for your father's funeral. I have paid-for you- In return-we will be married-and have sons and God willing-you will love them-with the same strength of feeling that you do not have for me.

[He grabs her arm --- is about to strike her again--]

Eustace My Lord?

Walter Send a message to Sir Guy of Gisborne. Tell him to come now. Now!

 [Exit all but Marian. She holds her cheek.]

Marian Robin –bold Robin Hood
Wounded-in the woods he falls.
Through briar and bramble now he crawls--
In agony---

SHERWOOD

[Robin blows the horn. Enter John.]

John Robin-Robin.

Robin John-my friend. Ah my wounds.

John No no no gentle Robin-who has done this to you?

[Enter Much and Will- followed by Tuck]

Tuck Stand back and give me room. Will-keep the watch. Go, go. He may be followed. Robin, look at me-look.

Much Give him some magic mead Tuck.

[Tuck does so]

Robin John-I need John.

John I'm here by your side Robin, as I always have been- and always will.

Robin Fetch me my bow Little John, and I will shoot an arrow through yonder window.

Much Window?

Tuck Be still he will speak again.

Robin Wherever that sad arrow falls, lay me down, lay me down.
No more to follow the huntsman's call, lay me down,
To sleep the longest sleep forever sound
In Sherwood Forest's hallowed ground.

[John is struck down with grief]

Tuck ---Give me back my mead.

Much Friar Tuck? How can you --of all people deny a dying man a drink?

Tuck I have heard the death speeches of many men, serfs, yeoman, lords- and not one of 'em ever spoke in rhyming couplets.

John You mean-he's not going to die?

Tuck No-though he might soon have a very large black eye.

[Robin leaps to his feet]

Much Whoa-it's a miracle.

John Robin?

Tuck Come here you play acting piece of good for nothing --

Much Hold, hold, good Friar and be glad.

Robin John forgive me. I meant no harm-I were just— [John grabs Robin.] Rehearsing.

[John suddenly embraces him-much to Robin's relief.]

Tuck Pah!

John I thought- I truly thought-

Robin I know John, I know.

John Rehearsing for what?

Robin For what I hope beyond hope-will happen next.

Will There's someone coming.

Robin Yes!

Tuck What are you playing at now? What new game is this?

Robin It has worked Tuck- my 'wound'-has done the trick and brought her out of Nottingham.

Much Who out of Nottingham?

Robin Now lads-I'm sick and about to die.

Much But you only just got better?

Tuck I'll take no part in your deceits-I will not—

Much Take part in what?

Robin MUCH! Listen close. I was 'pretending' to be wounded- to see if my pretence would make you believe I was going to die. Right?

Much --Right.

Robin And now I shall pretend again.

Much But--what about the window?

Robin Take him from me John.

Will It's the Lady Marian.

Robin Tuck-I beg you-in the name of love.

Tuck Love?

Robin God is love-you told me so. So?

Tuck Hell's bell's. You'll pay for your pranks- as I am an honest man you will.

[They hide]

Robin Will-give me that hide [deer hide] now greet the lady and tell her of my poor condition-{he points to his heart}.

[Robin lies down covered by the deerskin. Enter Marian.]

Marian Hello? Is someone there? Hello?

[Will drops down behind her and she turns in fear.]

Will Lady Marian? You must like my company.

[She hits him once on the nose]

Marian That is for threatening my life. Now take me to Robin Hood.

Will Aw [Holds his nose] You canna see Robin-he's on his death bed and asks to be left in peace—

Marian No-

Will But I will tell you summat he said-thinking no one could hear him.

Marian What did he say? Tell me.

Will He said-I hope she do come- I do hope it- for she have struck me in the heart as surely as the Sheriff.

[Robin moans. She pushes past Will and goes to him]

Marian Robin-can you hear me?

Robin What is it-who's there?

Marian It is Marian-Marian of York.

Robin I hear a voice-an angel's voice.

Will He has a fever my lady. His mind plays trick on him.

Robin And now I see her-a vision-Oh sweet Angel-

Will Calm yourself Robin-this is no vision but the lady herself come to see thee.

Robin You lie-you hornet. You backstabbing weasel. Why would an angel come to kiss a thief - an outlaw? Why?

Marian I-I don't know. I--

[Robin grabs her arm]

Robin If she were truly here-I would tell her what I truly feel.

Marian What would you tell her?

Robin That she should be free to love whom she will- and—[groans in pain]

Marian And?

Robin The life of a man is no more than a leaf—

Marian Robin?

Robin Yet leaves be stronger than stones.

[The others now gather round in a sad tableau.]

Much Don't cry my lady. After all -he's just pretending.

Marian What? Pretending?

Tuck Of course he meant no harm-

Robin No harm at all-I were just-

Marian Pretending?

Robin No disrespect.

Marian Pretending!

[She looks for a switch-stick which Tuck happily provides.]

Robin If I played false it were in action alone. I spoke truly from the heart.

[She hits him]

Robin Mercy my lady-

[She hits him again]

Robin Mercy.

Tuck Take no heed-there's far too much mercy goes on these days.

John Hit him again.

Will Harder.

[She chases him and beats him.]

Robin Will you kill me now? Truly I shall be beat to death.

Marian I'm not really going to beat you to death- I'm just pretending! How dare you-beardless-foolish puppy-play with people's feelings!

[She hits him one last time]

Tuck And there endeth the lesson.

W+J+M Amen.

Marian Now I will go. [Will stands in her way] Let me pass. Let me pass.

Robin Go where? Back to Walter Fitzwarren whom you do not cherish, fear to obey, and can never love?

[She runs at Robin in anger and the others catch her in mid-flight]

Much Steady there-steady.

Marian That is private. That is my concern, my fate. We have met once Robin Hood and once does not give you the right to preach to me about love- and freedom? And-if you call this freedom you are under some delusion. I call it- camping!

M+W+J Aye!

Robin And yet-though we met only once-you came-because you thought me wounded-and why do that- if you have no care for me-foolish puppy that I am?

[Marian marches off then realises-she's forgotten her cloak- she comes back and Little John offers it to her.]

John My lady- you have come a long way-

Much You must be tired

John Will you not stay some time with us- and get to know us 'all' a little better? For our first meeting let us make amends. Hey Will?

[Will nods]

Much We are not so bad-

Will Not so bad as Robin anyhow-

John Who is a trickster through and through-and we love him for it-

Will Though it makes us mad-

Much It makes us laugh.

John So humbly-from our hearts-stay awhile in Sherwood.

Will And be our guest if it would please you-

Much Cos-It would please us greatly.

Marian ----What do you suggest Friar Tuck?

Tuck Food! Something good and large. Venison-a pheasant or two, pigeon - partridge-pork—trout-and truffles. Good food and good company will close the several wounds that have been opened here. Some music and Oh-mead – perhaps?

Marian What would Robin say- 'if' he were here?

Tuck He would say- forgive his foolish games. He is still young
And youths are all the same.

John So stay with us one night-

Will Beneath the silent stars

Much Hear out tales –

John Discover who we truly are.

[She nods- A cheer. A feast magically appears- a rustic banquet-though there are silver goblets etc. Will Scarlett-provides the music.]

John Lady Marian- we have agreed to tell the tale-Of how I met Robin Hood-

Robin Of how I met little John.

Much Sit here my Lady-on this moss-for softness.

[Will and John carry on a log/plank –that has one flattened side. The log is placed between two wooden crosses/barrels and thus is raised from the ground]

Marian What is that log for?

Much You shall see my lady-but first they must joust a little.

Tuck And keep it clean!

[John and Robin Bow to each other.]

Robin Young was I, but twelve year old

When I came into this wood.

John A snotty lad, proud and vain

By the name of Robin Hood.

Much Ha!-

Robin An orphan-

John A wretch-

Robin Like himself- dressed from head to toe

John In rabbit furs-and deerskin.

Robin Though he looked his best in doe.

John HEY!

Robin No means had I to protect myself-

John Uh—from wolf-or human foe
So I cut me clear a staff of oak.

Robin And I made myself a bow.

Much Bow and foe-most excellent.

Robin With this bow I am the best.

John And he likes everyone to know.

Will Ha-I'm for you John. Called me a weasel!

John Once upon a day- I stood by a river wide.

Robin When I saw a little lad- on the other side.

 Small he was-a scrawny thing- no shoes upon his feet

John And with these words- the upstart did me greet.

Robin Stop there-stop there I say- and leapt upon a log.
 [He leaps on the log-tries to keep balance-A cheer.]
 This stream belongs to me.
 And if you wish to cross-you'll have to pay a fee

John *What me?*

Robin *Yes you.*

John *Not me*

Robin *Yes you-you'll have to pay a fee.*

John Why you toad, you frog say I
 And leapt upon same log.
 [He leaps on the log. A cheer]

John I will not pay-that is my word.
 Here's what I think of thee.

Robin And saying this he turned his back-

John And into water peed.

Tuck Keep it clean!

Much Hah-

Robin Such disrespect-I thought-quite riled
 So I aimed at him an arrow.

John Coward.

Robin He cried-

John Would shoot me from this log?

Uh-that is not wide-but narrow.
When all I have is one small stick
To pitch you in the shallows. Hah!

Will Arrow-narrow-shallow-I love it John-I love it.

Robin So I went- and came straight back
With a staff as big as his---

Tuck Careful!

Robin Pay the fee I says again, or your crown I'll surely crack.

John And as he spoke these foolish words- I gave his head a thwack.

Robin Who me?

John Yes you

Robin Not me.

John Then who-

All He gave his head a thwack

[He hits him off the log]

John Into water wet he fell

Robin And little John he laughed-
Do you want a hand he said-

John Or shall I build a raft?

Robin But up I came-

John Like a salmon leapt

Robin And struck him on the knee
There you go says I-that's the first part of the fee.

[Much+ Will Tuck Sing as Little John and Robin fight now with staffs.]

M+W+T *Neither would give up the fight, and so they fought into the night
Until a blow hit Robin Hood-into the air from where he stood-*

[He flies from the log into the arms of Will and Much]

Robin Enough. Enough!

M+W+T He cried in pain

Robin *You've beat me fair and square.
I release you from the fee
If you will ever be a friend to me.*

John *What me?*

Robin *Yes you-
I'll ever be a friend to thee!*

[They shake hands- a cheer]

Tuck *Now Will-play some tender tune for Tuck's digestion.*

[The lads disperse- to leave Marian and Robin. Will strums a lute.]

Marian *A true story?*

Robin *Give or take a rhyme. In three year Little John went from smallest to tallest- his
height changed but his name did not. Shall we?*

Marian *Can you?*

Robin *I should think so- good at most things.*

[He bows and she replies in kind- and they begin a slow courtship dance- which involves the couple
moving warily around each other.]

Marian *Your tale does not explain how boys so young came to live wild in the first
place?*

Robin *Each man has his own story-but the forest laws in one way or another are the
cause. Take Much-fined for carrying a bow and arrow—If you don't pay said the
Sheriff's man-we'll cut off your right hand. Much were only nine year old-so he
ran into the woods. They cut off his Father's hand instead.*

Marian *And what is your story?*

Robin *Mine?*

Marian *You spoke to the Sheriff of revenge. Revenge for what?*

Robin *That is my concern-my fate.*

Marian *You are evasive.*

Robin *You are nose-y.*

Marian *Very well-let us take smaller steps. Where were born?*

Robin *You would not know the village my lady.*

Marian *Tell me all the same.*

Robin Edwinstowe. A smallish place-unknown to folk from York.

Marian I was not born into wealth Robin. I understand more than you know. I too am a child of the forest. One day when I was ten – a knight came by on a dark horse. He stared at me- just stared. I will never forget it. Later I learnt that he had given my father a small fortune- so that we could move to York. There I was educated- turned into a lady. The knight spent ten years fighting in the holy land. We did not expect him to return—but he did.

Robin Walter Fitzwarren. Will you really marry him?

Marian I'm bound by the law- and he would do worse than cut off my hand if I were to break it.

Robin You cannot marry that man-I will not let it happen.

Marian What else should I do 'Robin Hood'? Live wild in the woods? Like a-a common thief? Forgive me.

Robin No-you are right. You have experienced what we've become and I am sorry for it. But I would be more -and so would they--

Will Someone's coming. Hold there!

[Exit Young Marian and young Robin. Enter Wilfred of Longdale carrying his son- an arrow in his back.]

Wilfred Robin. Robin.

Tuck Tis Wilfred of Longdale.

[Exhausted, Wilfred lays his son down. Tuck examines the boy.]

Robin What's happened Wilfred---who did this?

Wilfred He tried to run-but still the arrow found him. My son---my son.

[Tuck crosses himself and closes the boys eyes.]

Robin But why Wilfred-who?

Wilfred For that someone said my lad ran messages for you-Robin Hood.

Marian Who held the bow?

Wilfred --Lady Marian?

Robin It's alright Wilfred-the lady is our guest. Who held the bow?

Wilfred Who? Ask her! Her husband-that will be-Fitzwarren-he held the bow that killed my son-my son. You-lady-do not belong here---

Robin You are angry Wilfred--

Marian Let him speak.

Wilfred Speak? What shall I say? He has killed my son-my hope--

Will [Enters] Two or three scouts and behind them thirty men at least.

Wilfred No-they have followed me.

Robin Aye-it was his plan Wilfred. Now take your son- and when the time is right we will come and grieve with you Walter-of Longdale.

Wilfred He will kill you-kill you all. [Exit]

Tuck Take her away Robin- she cannot been seen here.

Marian No-I will speak to them---

John There's no speaking to be done-Go with Robin now.

Marian Let go of me.

Robin We are outnumbered. Marian-please

[Enter Soldiers. Robin takes Marian to one side to hide her- as Friar Tuck and Little John fight. The first two are fought off.]

Marian I will speak for Wilfred-I will speak for you all. I will write to the Queen-and tell her all that I have seen and heard.

Robin The Queen?

Tuck For pities sake--do you want to see her killed? [He fights off another soldier]

Robin Go.

[They embrace-and she goes. Robin blows his hunting horn and he and his men disappear into the Trees/foilage. Enter Sir Walter]

Walter Where are they?

Soldier Vanished sir-disappeared--like ghosts.

Walter ROBIN HOOD!

[Suddenly Wilfred enters knife drawn to kill the Sheriff-but he is disarmed and then cut down and dragged away.]

Walter How many examples must be made-before you give yourself up-Robin Hood?

[A soldier nails up a 'Wanted' poster. Exit Walter and soldier. The outlaws emerge from their hiding places.]

Tuck Marian?

Robin Safe.

Much They just-killed him-cut him down in cold blood.

Will Aye- while we stood by- and did nothing.

Much What could we do-but hide?

Will As we always do. I will hide no more

John Nor I. For sure I will kill this Sheriff with my bare hands if I must.

Much +Will Aye.

Robin You want war John? Is that it? Much-Will- fighting with your bare hands?

John [Grabs Robin by the shirt] We must do something!

Robin Then you must become everything he is not- and leave this life of common thievery behind.

[They look bemused at one another. Robin jumps up onto the log as before. As he speaks a light grows stronger on Marian who kneels as if praying with her eyes shut.]

Robin We cannot oppose him as one army might oppose another- for he has a thousand men and we are but a few. You want to die-or do you want to fight this man- and all he stands for?

J+W+M Aye.

Robin Then we must change. When he is cruel-let us be kind. When he takes food –let us give it. Shall one man be allowed to keep for himself all that nature provides in Sherwood while a thousand others starve? No-from this day we who are already outlawed shall hunt for the people- and feed the people-and break the forest law like never before until they laugh at it. What he steals from folk in taxes-we shall steal back in their name. From this day then- let us swear one to another-never to take from those who already have nothing- as we have done to our shame in times past. From this day we will only take from the takers- steal from the rich and give to the poor.

Marian Steal from the rich- and give to the poor.

Tuck Amen to that.

All Aye!

Robin This will be our creed

Marian And by these actions the people will see

Robin And feel the Sheriff's tyranny for what it is. From this day we leave our youthful selves behind-

Marian And in opposing all he does-

Robin We shall be made more than men- we shall be made-good men-

Marian We shall be reborn-

Robin And hope shall come to Sherwood as surely as the spring.

Marian As surely as the spring. Good and bold Robin Hood. [Marian now holds in her hand a letter to the Queen]

All ROBIN HOOD! ROBIN HOOD!